

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 24, 2021

The Honorable Mark Butler
Commissioner
Georgia Department of Labor
148 Andrew Young Intl Blvd, NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Commissioner Butler,

As members of the Georgia congressional delegation, we write to express our deep concern regarding the recent findings of an audit conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Inspector General (OIG), which states that Georgia failed to supply critical data related to the distribution of all the enhanced unemployment insurance benefits provided in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

The OIG report — released on May 28, titled “COVID-19: States Struggled to Implement CARES Act Unemployment Insurance Programs” — examined states’ implementation of the three newly created unemployment insurance programs created by the CARES Act: Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation, and Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation. Georgia was one of twelve states flagged for an in-depth analysis as part of OIG’s audit.

The audit found that Georgia failed to supply data on a number of key issues, including the timeliness of benefit distribution and the number of Georgians who requested the federally funded unemployment insurance supplement. There are two other states which were unable to provide data on the timeliness of claims through all three federal enhanced unemployment insurance programs. There were four other states which apparently did not report the required claims volume data. Georgia is the only state that was unable to provide data on either. In other words, the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) stands out in the OIG audit as uniquely unable to report on its administration of enhanced unemployment benefits.

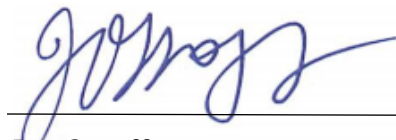
We recognize the past year put an enormous strain on state unemployment insurance systems. Indeed, it is the reason Congress included \$2 billion to shore up state unemployment insurance programs in the American Rescue Plan (ARP). However, it is essential that state Departments of Labor share important data in order to ensure that Americans who are entitled to these benefits receive the assistance they desperately need. Additionally, it is critical that the DOL have access to this data as it seeks to identify lessons learned from the past year and devise best practices for utilizing the assistance provided through the ARP to improve state unemployment insurance systems.

We therefore request that your office provide the relevant data to the Office of Inspector General as soon as possible or provide an explanation as to why the GDOL is unable to report relevant data. Furthermore, please confirm if the state plans to access ARP funds, which are intended to improve unemployment insurance systems, when they are made available. If GDOL plans to access these funds, please detail how the state plans to use them to improve services, including claims processing and benefits delivery.

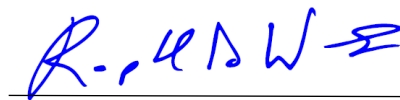
Recent reports place the GDOL backlog at around 80,000 Georgians. For too many, getting enrolled for benefits has required extensive efforts, including multiple months of emails and phone calls to the GDOL, as well as intervention by federal, state, and local elected officials. We need to understand what must be done to address the backlog of claims as soon as possible and what steps should be taken to avoid repeating these problems in the future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

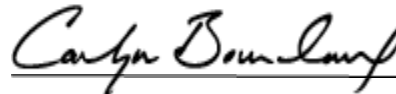
Sincerely,



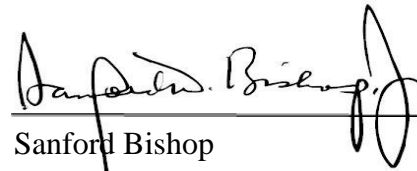
Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Carolyn Bourdeaux
Member of Congress



Sanford Bishop
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress